

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, FINANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY
TODD RUSSELL PLATTS, CHAIRMAN



Oversight Hearing:
***The Improper Payments Information Act – Are Agencies Meeting the
Requirements of the Law?***

Wednesday, April 5, 2006, 2:00 p.m.
Room 2247 Rayburn House Office Building

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN PLATTS

Congress has a responsibility to ensure that tax dollars are spent in the most effective manner, for their intended purpose. Unfortunately, as we will hear today, billions of dollars continue to be lost due to improper payments – any payment that should not have been made.

The Bush Administration and Congress have made the reduction of improper payments a top priority. In support of that goal, this Subcommittee believes that taxpayers have a fundamental right to know how their tax dollars are being spent. In 2002, my esteemed former colleague, Congressman Steve Horn, who served as Chairman of this Subcommittee, was successful in securing the enactment of the “Improper Payments Information Act of 2002”. This law has helped bring to the forefront the need to address this issue more aggressively.

The work of the past few years has brought us a long way to getting our arms around the extent of the problem. What we know today is that a primary cause of these mistakes, which occur throughout government, is the lack of adequate internal financial controls and business process systems. Some agencies have employed new technologies, such as data mining and electronic benefits transfer, with great success to help reduce their error rates. More can be done, and we will continue to conduct effective oversight on this important topic.

Today, we will hear from the Honorable Dr. Linda Combs, Controller in the Office of Federal Financial Management at the Office of Management and Budget. Dr. Combs, thank you for being here. We will also hear from McCoy Williams from the U.S. Government Accountability Office. Mr. Williams, you have been very helpful to the Subcommittee over the past three years. Thank you for being here again. We will also be joined by Mr. Charles Johnson of the Department of Health and Human Services, who is accompanied by Mr. Tim Hill, Chief Financial Officer at the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Thank you, and I look forward to your testimony.